

**Statement of Casey Dyson, Government Relations and Public Funding Director, Food & Friends, before the Montgomery County Council
April 11, 2023**

Good afternoon Councilmembers and guests. I am Casey Dyson, Government Relations and Public Funding Director at Food & Friends. I'd like to begin by thanking you for your continued support of our mission to improve the lives and health of Montgomery County residents living with serious illnesses such as cancer, kidney failure, HIV/AIDS, and others that are too sick to shop or cook for themselves. Your fiscal support, as well as the time you've spent volunteering with us, shows your commitment to the physical and mental health your neighbors.

For the past 35 years, Food & Friends has been providing freshly prepared, home-delivered, medically tailored meals, groceries and medical nutrition therapy to individuals living with serious illnesses. Our clients are referred to us from their healthcare providers, and there is no charge for services. Families and caregivers also can receive meals free of charge. Last year we delivered over 1.59 million meals and almost 1,600 nutrition encounters to nearly 4,900 people across much of Maryland, the District and Virginia. Of those, 150,373 meals were delivered to 443 Montgomery County clients and their dependents.

Because we are the only community-based organization in our region doing this work, last year we saw a 29% increase in referrals, with the largest spikes in clients experiencing heart diseases and diabetes. We are hearing from our referral partners that patients have been returning to care with pandemic-delayed diagnoses of severe illnesses. That means that more people are finding themselves in need of Food & Friends at a time when higher food and housing costs are already debilitating. Our clients are acutely ill and therefore are often unable to take advantage of other nutrition support programs or shop at a grocery store. Sixty-one percent of our clients report income of less than \$1,500/mo.

Food & Friends relies on philanthropy and health care partnerships in addition to public funds from federal, state, and local sources. We're committed to maintaining a diverse revenue stream and our support from the Montgomery County Council is a key part of our ability to carry out our work. For each dollar we receive from Montgomery County, we must raise almost \$13 from other sources. We are a good investment.

In addition to being good stewards of your money, we also reduce the cost of healthcare.

Participation in a medically tailored meal program is associated with improved mental health, fewer hospital and nursing home admissions, and lower overall medical spending. Those living with complex health condition who receive medically tailored meals and medical nutrition therapy experience 50% fewer inpatient admissions and 70% fewer emergency department visits than those not enrolled in such a program. A recent Tufts study estimates that if all US eligible patients received access to meals with nutrition standards such as ours, in just the first year over **1.5 million hospitalizations could be avoided for a net cost savings of \$13.6 billion.**ⁱ Our service makes a difference.

We support the work of the Montgomery County Food Council, the Office of Food System Resilience and are a proud community-based member of Nonprofit Montgomery. We appreciate the Council's support of our mission and look forward to additional shared public-private efforts to meet the needs of the nutritionally vulnerable in Montgomery County.

Thank you.

¹ Hager K, Cudhea FP, Wong JB, et al. Association of National Expansion of Insurance Coverage of Medically Tailored Meals With Estimated Hospitalizations and Health Care Expenditures in the US. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2022;5(10):e2236898. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.36898



FOOD & FRIENDS

Our work in Montgomery County

Delivering hope, one meal at a time®

Who we are:

Since 1988, we are the only community-based organization in the D.C. region providing home-delivered Medically Tailored Meals and Medical Nutrition Therapy to our neighbors living with serious illnesses that limit their ability to provide nourishment for themselves.

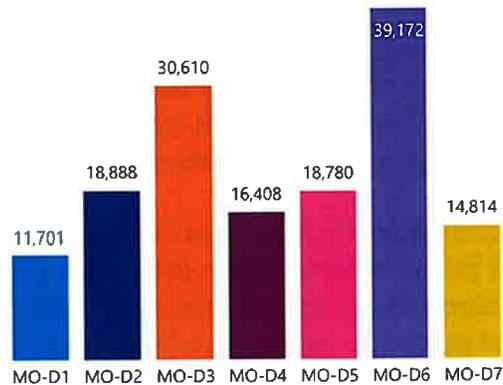
What we do:

With the help of thousands of volunteers, Food & Friends prepares and delivers nutritionally tailored, delicious meals directly to our neighbors' homes. Our Registered Dietitians and professional chefs work closely to provide individualized services to our clients.

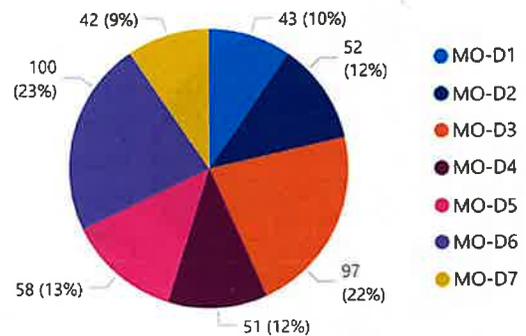
Who we serve:

Food & Friends provides Medically Tailored Meals, groceries, and Medical Nutrition Therapy to people living with life-challenging illnesses. All meals and services are free-of-charge to the client. Recognizing that clients with children often share their food with their kids, Food & Friends also provides services to dependents and caregivers in the household, ensuring the parent can focus on getting well.

Total Meals Delivered: 150,373 (FY22)



Total Clients Served: 443 (FY22)



Food & Friends is built on a simple premise: anyone can get sick, and everyone can help.

In FY22, Food & Friends home-delivered over 150,373 Medically Tailored Meals to 443 primary clients in Montgomery county. In 2022, our clients had a range of illnesses including cancer, diabetes, renal disease, HIV/AIDS, maternal health concerns, heart disease and other serious illnesses.



150,373

meals delivered to Montgomery County each year



443

clients live in Montgomery County



181

nutrition sessions with our Registered Dietitians



344

volunteers live in Montgomery County



61%

of all households served have income less than \$1,500/month

Connect



Food & Friends
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Washington, DC 20011

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www.foodandfriends.org
United Way #8429
CFC#52114



Delivering hope, one meal at a time®

Impact in Montgomery County

Lower Cost of Care:

Proper food and nutrition helps increase absorption of medication, reduces side effects, and helps patients maintain a healthy body weight. As a member of the national Food is Medicine Coalition (FIMC), we adhere to rigorous nationwide nutrition and quality standards and uniquely employ Medical Nutrition Therapy through our Registered Dietitians, personalizing each client's nutrition needs and encouraging lifelong improved nutrition.

According to the Maryland Department of Health, serious illnesses such as diabetes cost an estimated \$4.9 billion dollars in Maryland each year for the appx. 2.1M adults with diabetes or prediabetes. Research shows that people living with complex health conditions and enrolled in Medically Tailored Meal programs experience 50% fewer inpatient admissions and 70% fewer emergency department visits than similar patients not enrolled in a MTM program.ⁱ Just published national research shows that if all US eligible patients received access to MTMs with nutrition standards such as ours, in just the first year of service 1,594,000 hospitalizations could be avoided for a net cost savings of \$13.6 billion.ⁱⁱ

"Thank you! Excellent service, friendly staff, delivery always on time. Feeling a lot healthier and haven't been in the hospital since."

-Ava*, Food & Friends Client

*name changed to protect confidentiality



Equity:

Our Medically Tailored Meals and Medical Nutrition Therapy are free to clients and their families, and we work tirelessly to ensure that no eligible client is turned away. Over 61% of our client households have income of less than \$1,500 per month - we immediately address inequitable social determinants of health such as healthcare access and food security.

Healthier Communities:

We believe in the power of compassion and the importance of neighbors helping neighbors, so we create opportunities for impactful and fulfilling volunteer service that helps our sick neighbors and builds a healthier community for all. MTMs have been associated with reduced depressive symptoms and fewer dilemmas between paying for either food, healthcare or prescriptions.ⁱⁱⁱ Our Client survey shows that 71% of our clients report improved mental health, 80% report improved quality of life, 80% report they are better able to follow doctors' orders and over 93% of our clients reported that they learned to eat better for their health condition after talking with our dietitians.

Need for increased support:

Food & Friends saw a 25% increase in need in Maryland in 2022, likely due to pandemic-delayed diagnosis of severe illnesses and due to rampant food insecurity from inflation and a volatile job market. To achieve our mission, we stitch together Federal, State and local public funds, private contributions and reimbursements from partnerships with Medicaid managed care plans. By supporting Food & Friends' services, Montgomery County engages in a true public-private partnership that benefits the most vulnerable citizens and helps to build a healthier, more economically vibrant community.

i. Seth A. Berkowitz et al, Meal Delivery Programs Reduce the Use Of Costly Health Care In Dually Eligible Medicare And Medicaid Beneficiaries, HEALTH AFFAIRS, (2018).

ii. Hager K, Cudhea FP, Wong JB, et al. Association of National Expansion of Insurance Coverage of Medically Tailored Meals With Estimated Hospitalizations and Health Care Expenditures in the US. JAMA Network Open. 2022;5(10):e2236898. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.36898

iii. Tapper EB, Baki J, Nikirk S, Hummel S, Asrani SK, Lok AS. Medically tailored meals for the management of symptomatic ascites: the SALTFOOD pilot randomized clinical trial. Gastroenterology Report 2020;8(6):453-456. DOI: 10.1093/gastro/goaa059.



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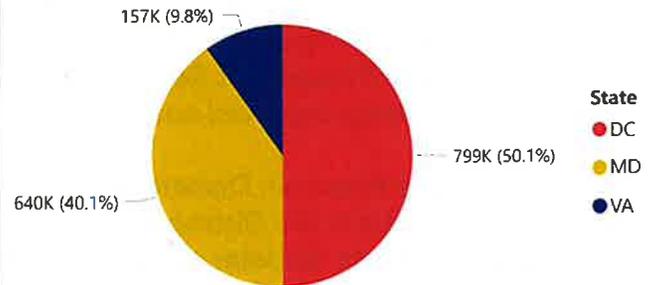
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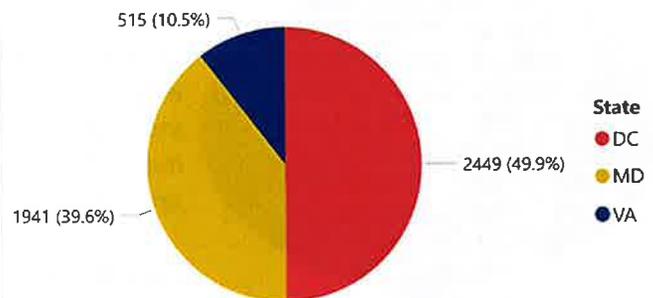
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Total Meals Delivered: 1.59M in FY22



Total Clients Served: 4,890 in FY22



Food & Friends is built on a simple premise: anyone can get sick, and everyone can help.

In FY22, Food & Friends home-delivered 1,596,322 Medically Tailored Meals to 4,891 primary clients in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. In 2022, our clients had a range of illnesses including cancer, diabetes, renal disease, HIV/AIDS, maternal health concerns, heart disease and other serious illnesses.



1,596,322
meals delivered to
D.C. residents



4,891
clients live
in the region



1,559
nutrition sessions
with our Registered
Dietitians



2,974
volunteers live
in the region



61%
of all households
served have income
less than \$1,500/month

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Volunteer Story

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

INSPIRED LIFE

Teen gives 16,000 valentines to people who might not otherwise get one

Patrick Kaufmann, 14, has involved students across the D.C. area to make the cards for people in hospitals, nursing homes and other places



By [Cathy Free](#)

February 11, 2023 at 6:00 a.m. EST

Patrick Kaufmann made 30 valentine cards along with some friends as a youth volunteer at a D.C. food nonprofit several years ago.

His handmade cards were tucked inside home-delivery meal packages and sent to sick children and adults. Afterward, Patrick, then 10, said he couldn't stop wondering if there might be other people who would appreciate a valentine but wouldn't be receiving one.

"I kept thinking, 'Wouldn't it be great if I could find a way to give everyone a valentine who might not get one?'" he said. "I decided it wouldn't be much trouble to make a few more."

As it turned out, many more.

In the fall of 2020, Patrick asked students at his school to make 300 valentines to deliver on Valentine's Day 2021 with meal packages provided by [Food & Friends](#), a D.C. charity that helps people with cancer, HIV, AIDS and other serious illnesses.

Then in 2022, he upped his game, enlisting the help of students at several D.C.-area schools to craft more than 3,000 cards.

This year he supersized it: He organized making and delivering 16,000 valentines for people who otherwise likely wouldn't get one. They were created by students at 62 schools in D.C., Maryland and Virginia, said Patrick, now 14, who personally recruits the classrooms that volunteer.

He recently developed a website for his project, Valentines by Kids, where he encourages everyone to cut out colorful hearts, write messages of kindness and help spread some love.

In the days leading up to Valentine's Day, the boxes of cards are picked up at his home in Potomac, Md., by delivery drivers and are taken to about 60 organizations Patrick has coordinated with, including hospitals, hospices, nursing homes and Food & Friends, where Patrick has volunteered with his father for several years.

"With more than 16,000 cards to distribute, our house looks like a FedEx distribution center," said his father, Roy Kaufmann, a lawyer who works in D.C.

"We didn't quite anticipate just how successful Patrick's efforts would be," Kaufmann said. "But he has it all under control and we are very proud of him."

Patrick, with help from his father, got funding from two local nonprofits to pay for a driver to pick up the valentines and deliver them to the various groups that will distribute them.

"They mean a lot to people who don't have much family and are living alone," said Patrick, a ninth grader at Washington International School in D.C. "A valentine will also really cheer people up if they've been sick or are working a lot."

"I hope it makes them realize that somebody is thinking about them and cares," he added.

Carrie Stoltzfus, executive director of Food & Friends, said she is grateful for the boxes filled with valentines to hand out with the agency's home-delivered meals.

"It's wonderful that Patrick thought to bring so many young people together to send messages of kindness to those we serve who are living with serious illnesses," Stoltzfus said.

Patrick doesn't know any of the people who receive the cards, but he hopes his efforts will brighten their days.

"I love getting valentines, and I also like to make them," he said.

His mother, Rosario Allauca Castillo, is a teacher at the Easy Spanish 123 language program in D.C., and she asks her classes to help make valentines, Patrick said.

Students of all ages are excited to help, he added, and they go to great efforts to make their valentines stand out.

"Some cards are covered with glitter, and some have stickers or are full of tiny hearts inside," he said. "No two are the same."

Students at Washington International School say they look forward every year to spending an hour or two crafting valentines for strangers and putting them in envelopes addressed to "My Friend."

"It makes me happy to know somebody gets a card if they don't have anyone else to spend the holiday with," said Max Rapaport, 10, who is in fifth grade at the school.

“The least we could do is give them a card showing that we care for them,” he said.

Max said he put large purple hearts on the front and back of his valentine this year, and he included a light pink heart in the middle with a poem: “Roses are red, violets are blue; We think you are amazing — you just have to know it too.”

“The biggest part is having empathy toward others and imagining what it would be like in their view,” he said.

One of his fifth-grade classmates, Liliana Fadakar, covered her card in pink and red hearts, saying she wanted to “brighten the day of somebody who is sick and might be suffering in the hospital.”

“The best part of making the cards was imagining how the people would feel when they receive a Valentine’s Day card they weren’t expecting,” said Liliana, 10.

Patrick said that’s what keeps him motivated to continue the project, which he wants to expand if can find enough volunteers.

He says he’s felt a sense of accomplishment looking at the stacks of heart-covered boxes that have taken over his family’s living room and dining room.

“My parents, my uncle and grandmother help me bundle the cards and put them in the boxes, but sometimes, it’s hard to keep up,” he said. “After Valentine’s Day, we’ll all be taking a little break.”

